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Postcolonial Approaches to Communication: Charting the Terrain, Engaging the Intersections

This essay provides an introduction to postcolonial theory and criticism. It offers an overview of the questions and problematics with which postcolonial scholarship is concerned. It charts the historical and intellectual development of postcolonial studies. Finally, it explores the intersections of postcolonial studies and communication studies, and makes a case for the relevance of this area of work to communication scholarship.

This special issue was born out of a vision and a conviction that postcolonial and communication studies had something to offer each other. Instead of starting with the assumption that only communication scholarship had something to gain from postcolonial studies, we conceived this issue, rather, with the idea that the politics of postcoloniality is centrally imbricated in the politics of communication. Yet, the communication dimension (except media) has hardly received any attention in postcolonial studies, just as postcolonial issues, for the most part, have been elided in communication studies. We consequently recognized that bringing these two areas together could invite a productive reconceptualization of communication, as well as a thinking through of the politics of postcoloniality from the perspective of communication. Thus, we do not see postcolonial scholarship or communication scholarship in an "othering" relationship with each other. Rather, what we see are the ways in which various cultural phenomena of postcoloniality and communication are intertwined in each other, and how recognizing the postcolonial politics of communication opens up new vistas for communication scholarship.

In what follows, we introduce the field of postcolonial scholarship by providing a discussion of the questions and problematics it is concerned with. We then explore why postcolonial politics should be of concern to communication scholars. Our hope is that our audience will recognize the relevance of this interdisciplinary area for communication studies, and why engaging the "postcolonial"—both as an intellectual project and as a cultural phenomenon—enables us to rethink communication through new visions and revisions, through new histories and geographies.

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Postcolonial Studies: An Overview

Postcolonial studies, broadly described, is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry committed to theorizing the problematics of colonization and decolonization. As a field it is positioned within the broader critical project of cultural studies that has had so much influence in communication scholarship. While postcolonial scholarship is committed to theorizing the problematics and contexts of de/colonization, its focus however is not merely the study of colonialism(s). That is, it is concerned not merely with chronicling the facts of colonialism. Its commitment and its critical goals, first and foremost, are interventionist and highly political. In its best work, it theorizes not just colonial conditions but *why* those conditions are what they are, and how they can be undone and redone (although more work is needed on this latter aspect). This is important to keep in mind for it emphasizes that not every study of colonialism would necessarily qualify as a postcolonial study. Merely describing or chronicling the facts of colonialism, without taking an emancipatory political stance, and without offering interventionist theoretical perspectives through which to examine the violent actions and erasures of colonialism, does not make a study postcolonial in its critical impulse.

To say this is not to guard boundaries (although we feel that it is desirable to guard some boundaries, less they become so open that we forget what it is we are opposing in the first place), rather, it is to posit that the best form of postcolonial scholarship, at the end as at the beginning, is always, to borrow Stuart Hall's (1992) words, a detour towards something more important. And that something more important is its transformative stance. Postcolonial scholarship, because of the politics of its emergence and the nature of the problems it is concerned with, exists in tension with established institutionalized knowledge. It attempts to undo (and redo) the historical structures of knowledge production that are rooted in various histories and geographies of modernity. This means that the questions and problematics of colonialism that postcolonial scholarship concerns itself with emerge from larger social contexts—contemporary or past—of modernity. In engaging with questions of colonialism and modernity, postcolonial scholarship often finds itself colliding with the limits of knowledge structures—in terms of scope and method—derived from, and enabled by, various imperial and national modernities within which Anglo-Euro academy was produced and is esconced. In the process it tries to redo such epistemic structures by writing against them, over them, and from below them by inviting reconnections to obliterated pasts and forgotten presents that never made their way into the history of knowledge. Thus, as Henry Schwarz (2000) notes of postcolonial studies, "it is not merely a theory of knowledge but a 'theoretical practice,' *a transformation of knowledge from static*

disciplinary competence to activist intervention. Postcolonial studies would be pointless as a mere intellectual enterprise, since Western intellectual enterprise itself is fundamentally dependent on Europe's conquest and exploitation of the colonial world" (p. 4).

This was certainly the case with Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Gayatri Spivak's *In Other Worlds* (1988b), the South Asian Subaltern Studies Collective writing nationalist "history from below" or, more recently, works such as Lata Mani's *Contentious Traditions* (1999) and Dipesh Chakraborty's *Provincializing Europe* (2000). These are projects that embody some of the most provocative intellectual offerings of the late twentieth century. These are works that methodologically and theoretically provide examples of what a rigorous interrogation of the linkages between colonialism and knowledge should look like. These studies confront us with the recognition that institutionalized knowledge is always subject to forces of colonialism, nation, geopolitics, and history. Postcolonial scholarship, then, by the very nature of its commitment and content exists as an interruption to established disciplinary content that was, and continues to be, forged through structures of modernity and histories of imperialism. This last point has particular relevance to communication scholarship, especially when we begin to historicize the field and link its emergence with a particular historical moment in the United States—the capitalism of post World War II America when the United States' position as a new world power was on the rise.

To a large extent, the critical impulses informing postcolonial studies are reflected in much of left leaning scholarship, including cultural studies, marxist theory, feminist theory, postmodern theory, queer theory, and more. So what makes postcolonial studies different? What is it about postcolonial scholarship that enabled it to perform such significant interruptions not just in mainstream knowledge, but also in its allied theoretical areas, such as the ones mentioned above? While our essay, in various ways, is an attempt to answer this question, suffice it to say for now that the inherent tense relationship between postcolonial studies and traditional institutionalized knowledge emerges from the fact that no other critical discourse has collided against the structures of colonial modernities in such a head-on fashion as postcolonial theory has. No other academic discourse has forced upon us, to this extent, a recognition of the mutual operations (and erasures) of history, geography, geopolitics, and international division of labor, through which institutionalized knowledge in the West (but not only) has been performed—even when that knowledge has tried to write against the grain of established ways of thinking, as in different versions of critical scholarship.

Thus, for example, when Anglo-Euro academy, riding on the radical waves of poststructuralism and postmodernism in the 1980s was cel-

ebrating or despairing the death of the subject, postcolonial scholarship forcefully historicized this subject as the subject of imperial Europe. It asked for whom the subject had died, if in fact it had, and what international histories may have gone into the production of this subject in the first place. So when Michel Foucault was overhauling and exposing the power/knowledge function through which institutionalized epistemes in the West had been performed, and the sovereign rational subject of Enlightenment had been constituted, by refocusing attention on the subjugated knowledges of madness, prisons, (homo)sexuality, Gayatri Spivak (1988a) came along and asked, but what if these subjugated knowledges were themselves a part of a larger history of imperialism whose connections spill over to the other side of the international division of labor ? What if Foucault's ascribing of a normative stance to these particular types knowledge as "subjugated knowledge" once again normalized the subject of Europe, while on the other side of European capitalism languished forms of knowledge so far removed and so violated by the machinery of imperialism that they cannot even be accessed, let alone subjugated?

Similarly, when postmodern and poststructuralist feminist thought dominated paradigms in women's studies in the late 1970s and 1980s, by showing how the subject of modernity was a male bourgeioisie subject whose dominance needed to be theorized, or when it argued against essences by emphasizing the performativity of gender, postcolonial feminist scholars such as Rey Chow (1991, 1992), Chandra Mohanty (1991, 1996), Trinh Minh-ha (1986, 1989), and Gayatri Spivak (1985, 1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1992, 1993, 2000), among several others, insisted that the sexual difference through which the masculine subject of modernity had been privileged, or the performativity of gender through which essences were de/naturalized, must be connected to larger international histories, geopolitics, and colonial modernities. They argued that such connections complicate and interrupt postmodern and poststructuralist feminist theorizing by locating the reductive politics of sexual difference in the excesses of colonial modernity, and by forcing a recognition of race, nation, and imperialism, that had been elided in much of postmodern and poststructuralist feminist scholarship.

To sum up the distinctiveness of postcolonial studies from other forms of critical scholarship, then, it could be said that postcolonial scholarship provides a historical and international depth to the understanding of cultural power. It studies issues of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality, that are of concern to contemporary critical scholarship by situating these phenomena within geopolitical arrangements, and relations of nations and their inter/national histories. Further, many forms of critical scholarship tend to be nation centered. By this we mean that

the scope of their engagement tends to be bound within national boundaries. The scope of postcolonial scholarship, on the other hand, because of the problematics it is concerned with, extends beyond the nation. This going beyond the nation however does not entail a static and apolitical engagement with inter/national relations. Rather, it entails geopoliticizing the nation and locating it in larger (and unequal) histories and geographies of global power and culture.

Finally, we think that postcolonial scholarship constitutes one of the most central critical lenses through which to name and theorize cultural conditions of contemporary society. This is because postcolonial scholarship theorizes the geographical, geopolitical, and historical specificities of modernities *within* which other forms of power—such as race, sexuality, culture, class, and gender—are located. This means that any engagement with these other forms of power is, at some level, always an engagement with geographical, historical, and geopolitical relations of modernities, whether these relations are explicitly recognized or not. This further means that the problematics that other forms of critical scholarship are concerned with are imbricated in relations of colonial modernities and in the various postcolonial politics that form the underside of such relations. This is not to say that the value of other forms of critical scholarship pales in comparison to that of postcolonial scholarship. Rather, it is to recognize that postcolonial scholarship, because of its focus on the various relations and effects of modernities, functions as an important, and perhaps even necessary, point of theoretical departure through which to engage and comprehend the complexities of these other forms of power.

So far, we have provided a brief sense of the impulses informing postcolonial scholarship. However this sense remains incomplete unless we connect it to the history of the emergence of postcolonial scholarship in the academy. The emergence of postcolonial studies in the Anglo-Euro scene can be traced to several sociological and intellectual conditions. The most obvious are the various decolonization movements that occurred in the wake of World War II. This was a time when various national liberation movements began to shake off, or challenge, territorial European colonial domination. A key event here was the Indian independence from British rule in 1947. New nation-states emerged in developing worlds that were gathered under the political entity of the "third world" (a term now contested) crystallized in the famous 1955 Non-Aligned Summit, now known as the Bandung Conference.

These decolonization attempts resulted in some predictable migratory situations. As a result of the depletion of raw materials and resources by former colonial powers, as well as previous suppression of any attempts by the colonized to produce a self-governing political struc-

ture, many of the emerging nation-states lacked, and consequently had to build, the infrastructure necessary to sustain a "civil society" (for example, stable economic and political relations). This complex historical moment resulted in a huge wave of "third world" migration to metropolitan centers of former and current colonial powers—powers whose presence had been constituted in the first place by this history of violence. The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, consequently witnessed an unprecedented wave of migrations of colonized peoples into the United Kingdom, and later the United States.

This wave of im/migration constituted, in many ways, a re/turn of the repressed, the "midnight's children" who arrived at the doors of neo/colonial power. Through this arrival they reminded the world, against the West's self-sanctioned forgetting, that "western metropole must [now] confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative *internal to its national identity*" (italics added; Bhabha, 1994, p. 6). As a sociological condition, postcoloniality thus is the "always already" the underside of Anglo-Euro history, casting a long shadow on its self-proclaimed enlightenment and teleology of progress. The postcolonial condition is the supplement that haunts and taunts Euro modernities, speaks its tragedies and ironies. It is the violent name of the colossal failure of the project of European modernity and its master tropes such as democracy, self-determination, civil society, state, equality, the individual, free thought, and democratic justice—tropes that showed their limit and betrayed their own logic in the moment of colonialism. The postcolonial condition, following Dipesh Chakraborty (2000), can thus be described as one that emerged out of a refusal of the "waiting room" version of dominant histories by the colonized. These were histories that had performed themselves by ascribing to the colonized (and the subaltern) a status of "not yet" against which the colonized clamored "now" (p. 9).

This wave of migrations unleashed by the insistent "now" of decolonizations saw, among other things, an influx of intelligentsia into institutions of higher knowledge in the United States and Britain, among other countries. The English speaking culture of these nations played a major role in drawing English speaking ex-colonized peoples, and it was here that we roughly saw the institutionalized birth of postcolonial scholarship in the academy. Postcolonial intellectuals found themselves drawn into teaching areas such as comparative literature, international relations, development studies, and anthropology—in short, academic areas that maintained a focus on international cultural perspectives.

While this is one of the most central social conditions that resulted in the establishment of the academic area of postcolonialism, there are other social histories too that should not be ignored. An important one is

America's neocolonial relation with several national sites after World War II. For instance, United States' relations with the Philippines, Vietnam, Mexico, and Korea, as well as its relations with internal colonies such as Hawaii, resulted in the emergence of Vietnamese, Philippine, Mexican, Korean, and Hawaiian diasporas within the United States. The politics of these diasporas are, of course, historically and geographically different, in terms of their postcolonial relations with the United States. Nonetheless, they confront us with the postcolonial histories and geographies that underwrite the production of North America. The postcolonial histories of these and other diasporas, however have unfortunately not gained the kind of legitimacy they should receive in postcolonial scholarship. This is partly because postcolonial scholarship has so strongly become associated with the South Asian diaspora—at least in its early phase of development. These other histories remind us that there are colonial contexts beyond the British commonwealth that must be accounted for in understanding the politics of postcoloniality. In addition, these other histories are also important to confront because they disrupt the myth of American exceptionalism, in which historical colonialism too often remains associated with Britain and Europe while post civil rights America positions itself as the new world of democracy, and the space for the production of new and liberatory forms of selfhood.

It is certainly not an accident, we think, that in the United States' academy, only those forms of postcolonial scholarship that have taken as their topic European or British colonialism have gained currency. America, as a site of colonialism whose history runs back several years, has only recently become a focus in postcolonial scholarship. This growing focus is evidenced in some sophisticated (but scant) work being done on Anglo America's various neocolonial relations with other national sites. For example, Walter Mignolo's (1995a, 1995b, 2000) work on Latin America and its historical connections with Anglo America, as well as San Juan Jr. (1995, 1996, 1999) and Vicente Rafael's (2000) work on Philippines' neocolonial relations with the United States, are important in this context. To bring up these other postcolonial histories, often eclipsed in our theorization of postcoloniality, is to recognize the heterogeneity and diverse potential of this area of work. At the same time, it is to acknowledge that the geographical scope of postcolonial studies is not a given.

Our discussion of postcolonial studies, so far, has been (deliberately) Anglo/Euro centered. That is, we have focused, for the main part, on the emergence of this intellectual area in relation to the time frame of European and Anglo colonialisms. This is, of course, necessary because European/Anglo modernities continue to remain one of the dominant forms of colonial modernities and hence their legacy and responsibility must

be confronted. But there is more to the story of postcolonial studies and there is more to the scope of this intellectual area. For instance, the historical relation between Japan and Korea, and Japan's economic stronghold in several parts of Asia, constitute important examples of colonial dominance produced by modernities outside of Euro/Anglo modernity. Recent scholarship within postcolonial studies has thus rightly begun insisting on the need to examine such other modernities that are not framed by the historical time of Europe. Scholars such as Tani Barlow (1997), San Juan Jr. (1999) and Timothy Mitchell (2000) have emphasized the importance of forging other lexicon through which to understand modernities that are not modeled on the European framework. For instance, Barlow (1997) argues that "if colonialism is said, in a categorical sense, to be best exemplified by the British Raj, and all other forms of colonialism are understood in reference to that historical model, then not only are all other formations derivative but conditions fundamentally unlike that originary design might indeed by inconceivable or unseeable" (p. 5). Clearly there is a danger in normalizing one historical time or one narrative of modernity as being constitutive of colonialism. Clearly there is a risk, at some level, of recentering the very narrative of European modernity that postcolonial studies aim to unsettle.

In recent times, postcolonial studies has shown a growing engagement with other forms of colonial and national modernities that were forged through other histories and other geographies. Such work is desirable and necessary. This diversity that needs to occur in postcolonial studies cannot, however, eclipse the story of European modernity or deny its geopolitical and global dominance. For at the end, as Dilip Gaonkar (1999, p. 13) has suggested, no discourse or interrogation of "alternative modernities" or "other modernities" can escape acknowledging the dominance of Western modernity given that Western modernity has traveled through cultural and economic relations, practices, and institutional arrangements to the rest of the world. Thus, even to think about, and resurrect, stories of other modernities is, at some level, to think through and against Western modernities (pp. 13–14).

The need for exploring other modernities, the need for embracing diverse perspectives on colonialisms that can remain sensitive to different contexts and times of colonialism, means that rigorous postcolonial scholarship must remain attentive to the context of colonialism. Taking postcolonial theories that emerged out of a study of a particular context of modernity or a particular historical time and mechanically applying them to other contexts and times can be problematic. It can be problematic because this can reproduce a dangerous acontextualism that is sometimes seen in postcolonial studies (especially, scholarship that comes out of literary studies where the "text" and "narrative" of colonialism be-

come everything while the historical context disappears in the background). Additionally, such acontextualism can flatten the story of modernities by implicitly denying any change in its relations from one time to another, from one context to another.

So, for example, the theoretical perspective that Edward Said (1978) described as "Orientalism" works well to understand colonial formations in earlier times when the West-East, North-South, divide was still clear. But it does not work as well in contemporary times, in which the lines separating the East from the West, and the North from the South, are increasingly becoming porous under conditions of globalization. Similarly, the diasporic politics of "third space" or "border lives" produced by migratory waves of decolonization, that was cogently theorized by Homi Bhabha (1990, 1994), has more relevance to understanding postcolonial formations that emerged out of British colonialism, which saw massive territorial displacements of migrants into metropolitan centers. But the theory of "third space" does not work as well in regards to understanding the various diasporic politics of contemporary times which are not always predicated on the migrations of colonized people.

Today, because of the globalization of capital, complex forms of deterritorializations and reterritorializations are occurring in the lifestyles and everyday practices of inhabitants in many countries, which are producing new relations of displacements and diaspora *within* the nation itself. One thinks here of the cosmopolitical landscapes and lifestyles in cities such as Mumbai, New Delhi, Bangalore, Dubai, Muscat, and Hong Kong post-1997, where complex diasporas are being produced that often exist in stark contrast to the otherwise nationalist rhetorics of such nations. For example, the city of Bangalore in India is now one of Asia's biggest "tech cities"—the Silicon valley of South Asia. The changing and yuppified cultural and physical landscape of this city produces varied forms of cosmopolitanisms and varied re/placements of certain sectors of the population—mainly "thirty something" middle and upper-middle class professionals—that are not a result of any kind of colonial migration. Rather, they are indicative of how we need to rethink issues such as third space, diaspora, and nomadism—concepts that have become entrenched in the vocabulary of postcolonial studies. For example, we need to disassociate these concepts from their naturalized association with resistance and international mobility. We need to understand how these categories—contrary to always being an "other" of the nation or an "other" of colonialism—are being rearticulated to the nation and through the nation, through new logics under transnational relations of capital and culture. If Homi Bhabha's (1990, 1994) "third space" of hybridity implicitly implied a "first" (the colonizer) and the "second" (the colonized), then today the temporal logic underlying the "third space"

does not hold, for the "third space" could very well be a "fourth," a "fifth," a "sixth," and a "seventh space," and so on, with no clear sense as to what came before and what comes after. We live in a time of constant re/placement and reterritorialization as global capital connects, disconnects, and reconnects spaces in new ways and through constantly shifting lines of power. Thus the temporal, linear, and binary logic underlying the notion of "third space" fails in such a condition. The concept of the diaspora call out for a situated-ness in a logic of space instead of only a logic of time, without offering any guarantees about its moral and political positioning.

Postcolonial Thematics

The topic of modernity, as suggested above, constitutes the central investigative impulse of postcolonial studies. Situating modernity within the frame(s) of colonialism, postcolonial studies remains concerned with its various attendant topics such as nation and national identity, subalternity, diaspora, transnationalisms, cosmopolitanisms, de/territorializations of colonial and national power, the gendered and sexual politics of these relations, globalization, politics of im/migration, et cetera. In other words, postcolonial scholarship is concerned with phenomena, and effects and affects, of colonialism that accompanied, or formed the underside of, the logic of the modern, and its varied manifestations in historical and contemporary times. Postcolonial scholarship studies these relations not only from the framework of dominance but also from that of resistance. Thus, for example, studies of diaspora attempt to understand diasporic formations not merely as a phenomenon that is an effect of colonial occupations but also as a site of resistance to colonialism.

Postcolonial scholarship is not driven by any particular method. Because its questions emerge from larger social contexts, its method is therefore shaped by the questions posed by the contexts. Thus diverse methodological perspectives from ethnography to textual criticism can fall under its rubric. In this sense, postcolonial theory is committed to rigorous interdisciplinarity. Further, postcolonial scholarship is not shaped by any one philosophical tradition. Perspectives in Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis have all been used to understand the varied dimensions of historical and contemporary colonial conditions. There is however a need for more postcolonial work that focuses on the material dimensions of colonialism. A postcolonial Marxist approach is an obvious and powerful tool through which to examine the varied material relations of colonialism. In recent times, the works of scholars such as Aijaz Ahmad (1992), Arif Dirlik (1997, 2000), Akhil Gupta (1998), San Juan Jr. (1999), Aihwa Ong (1999), and Gayatri Spivak

(1988a, 2000), among others, argue for an attention to, or have moved towards examining, the material relations of colonialism through the utilization of Marxist oriented approaches.

Postcolonial studies do not privilege any one methodology over another. Different philosophical traditions have been deployed to examine various changing contexts of colonialism. It is important to emphasize however that whatever method(s) may be used in postcolonial scholarship, there is one issue to which practitioners of postcolonial studies remain committed—methodological reflexivity. While working within a certain philosophical or methodological tradition (be it deconstruction or ethnography), postcolonial scholars remain acutely aware of the history, heritage, and legacies of such methods, and the dilemma that consequently confronts the researcher.

For example, in the field of ethnography (an area of significant relevance to communication scholars), Kamla Visweswaran's foundational work *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (1994) pushes and problematizes not only the boundaries of traditional ethnography predicated on the objectivity of the ethnographer, but even the boundaries of postmodern ethnography. This work is an examination of the narratives of a handful of elderly South Indian women who had participated in the Indian nationalist movement against British colonialism. In interviewing these women, and examining their narratives about their participation in the nationalist movement, Visweswaran shows how the subjects of her examination—the women—frequently refused or deflected the subject position of nationalists. They did this either in some sort of silent coalition whereby the old secrets or pain of the nationalist movement were being concealed, or through acts of betrayal whereby one woman would reveal some "secret" about another woman to the ethnographer. The women at times refused the very narrative, the very "fiction," of nationalism through which Visweswaran—the ethnographer—engaged them. Such "failures" of her ethnography were moments in which complex relations between the ethnographer, her methodology, and the subjects of ethnography came into the foreground. These were moments in which the history and memories of nationalism and colonialism shaped, constrained, and interrupted the project of her ethnography. This study foregrounds how nationalism and colonialism become the very context against which the methodology of ethnography, and the assumptions informing it, collide and struggle.

Thus, traditional methods and perspectives themselves become a part of the context of examination of colonialism that the postcolonial researcher forcefully becomes engaged in. They become a reminder, as it were, of the betrayals of the researcher by her method. But these betrayals, these "failures," simultaneously constitute the points at which the

method becomes redone, reworked, and rearticulated. This has perhaps remained one of the most significant theoretical contributions of postcolonial scholarship—the way in which traditional methods and perspectives (including those in left oriented theory) inevitably undergo a makeover in which categories of history, geography, nation, and colonialism all play a part.

Communication and Postcolonial Theorizing

Given the richness and scope of postcolonial studies, how do we begin to form productive intellectual alliances between this theoretical body of work and the communication discipline? The connections, we believe, can be mutually informing and contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the contemporary scene of social transformation. There is a growing awareness of the limitations and parochialism of theory so steeped in Eurocentrism that it either ignores completely or oversimplifies the complexity of the "rest" of the world. This inadequacy is becoming increasingly transparent in the context of transnational connections and the unfolding drama of globalization.

The complexity of everyday life and cultural practices worldwide are changing with the proliferation of new technologies and an ever expanding world market. The ripple effect of these changes—felt across multiple areas of economic, social, and political life—make it very clear that globalization is, as Jameson (1999) reminds us, a "multileveled and relational phenomenon" (p. xi). This suggests that both materially and conceptually, we need to grapple with intersections at different levels. Whether it is high-speed communication systems, global migration, or the circulation of images, we are faced with the coming together of contradictory forces and incommensurable differences. The critical vein of postcolonial theory enables a complicating of these overlapping and interstitial spaces. It also powerfully reminds us that these global issues are not born fully formed, Minerva style, but rather have to be situated within the larger historical sweep of colonialism and its imperial centers as well as within both the present and the historical. The issues of intersection and historicity are significant to communication scholars in responding to this changing terrain of globality and its emerging sites of inquiry.

With this renewed interest across the academy in the area of culture and communication, the communication discipline has to respond and rise to the challenge of the times. If theory in communication is to reflect the exigencies of the global moment then we need to rethink the ways in which our intellectual quest relates to the cultural and social formations

around us. The discipline at large valorizes a view of communication that is rooted in the West and is largely influenced by modernist intellectual and institutional structures. We need to revisit Grossberg's (1982) question: "What are the particular involvements and investments of communication in real historical social formations?" (p. 84). The politics of communication are of central importance in the understanding of the contradictions and ambivalence in our deeply divided world. To overlook this is to be not only reductive in our research endeavors but also intellectually misleading. Preserving and retrieving "innocent" knowledge (see Flax, 1992; Grossberg, 1997) does little to further a critical understanding of the intersecting lines of reality in today's seemingly connected yet divided world. Taking into account the historical genealogy of the field, a postcolonial intervention pushes for more socially responsible problematizations of communication. It is these critiques that will lead eventually to the production of a more just and equitable knowledge base about the third world, the other, and the "rest" of the world.

The terms communication and culture are often used synonymously, thereby collapsing concerns about issues of domination and geopolitical configurations affecting gender, sexuality, race, or ethnicity. In addition, critical scholars have been writing about the lack of attention paid to the historical in communication research (see Hardt & Brennen, 1993). The postcolonial connection is a powerful way of restoring the macro structures and the historical trajectories that frame contemporary social relations within the global/local nexus. Denaturalizing communication (to use Grossberg's words) and problematizing culture from a postcolonial perspective allows us to go beyond the descriptive and account for the ways in which the Western realities have spread across the world as the universal condition. Radhakrishnan (2000) argues that "it is the ability of the developed world to conceptualize and theorize its particular-organic empirical reality into a cognitive-epistemic formula on behalf of the entire world that poses a dire threat to other knowledges" (p. 40). The other is caught between the sweeping gesture of this universalizing mode and, at the other extreme, going nativist and subsuming everything under a culturalist argument. Both types of epistemic orientation within communication studies have to be subjected to critique in the context of transnationalism. The current preoccupation with globalization and multiculturalism both in and outside the academy betray an ahistorical, benign articulation of culture and difference. Let us first examine the concept of globalization. The term inevitably heralds a connected world of utopian possibilities—the ultimate dream of corporate slogans. Behind the veneer of a seamless globe are the realities of deep divisions and inequities of exchange. The various flows of objects, per-

sons, images, and discourse are as Appadurai (2000) emphasizes not "coeval, convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent" (p. 5). Appadurai also writes that although these disjunctive flows assume local forms, they have contexts that are anything but local. It is this simultaneity of production that demands our theoretical attention especially in terms of conceptualizing context within global/local configurations. Take for example the recent events in the UK involving a series of racially motivated attacks and confrontations between South Asian immigrants and white youths. The aggression has to be situated historically in order to understand the deep-seated resentments on both sides. The racism has to be understood as an extension of the colonial refusal to acknowledge the admittance of the periphery into the metropolitan centers. Meanwhile, the immigrants' deep-seated resentment of the colonizer is (re)enacted in the transplanted cultural space with memories of past and present ruptures. The immigrant, being outside of the nation, is only ambiguously admitted to the realm of citizenship. The encounters of the everyday are framed by the larger narration of political, economic, and cultural processes. The driving force of postcolonial work is to interrogate the universalizing discourse of Western modernity. As Radhakrishnan (2000) points out, the fact that "every local-native-indigenous reality has been touched by the morphology of modernism and the dominance of nationalism and the nation-state, makes it imperative for postcoloniality to participate on more than one level and in more than one location" (p. 37).

The Elian Gonzalez case in the United States is another instance of this simultaneity of multiple productions. The mythically recreated saga of the little Cuban boy, saved at sea off the coast of Florida, is evidence of how history, citizenship, politics, the global, local, and communication come together in complex ways which impact life in postcolonial globality. Charting the epistemic travel of the West and its influence on the rhythm of the everyday in different contexts, it becomes apparent that the past and present are produced and reproduced simultaneously (see Harootunian, 2000). Struggles over race, ethnicity, and national belonging, need to be seen as the unfolding constitution of multiple realities collapsing over time and space dimensions.

Postcolonial engagements strive to provide theoretical frameworks to understand ways in which cultures are constituted and contested. As Spivak says in her interview in this issue, "The theoretical base of postcolonial studies also allows for multiplicity to be thought of in a way that is different from just simply the Rainbow Coalition." The rhetoric of multiculturalism celebrates the diverse assemblage of cultures in their pristine flavors—colorful yet standing separate in their authenticity. The commodification of cultures and the production of the native is

related to the production of postcolonial modernity (Chow, 1993). The native gets resurrected in essentialist trappings and fixed in static categories of ethnic culture. The discrete positioning of cultures without any sense of their interconnected histories reproduces the violence of colonial modernities and fixes difference in a spectacle of otherness. The packaging of otherness promotes the interests of transnational corporatism and serves also as a politically correct gesture. Such multiculturalism, which often serves as a stand-in for progressive politics, completely misses the point about diversity as struggle and contestation. Complex issues of race and difference are domesticated according to Mohanty (1994) by formulating the problem in narrow, interpersonal terms and by rewriting historical contexts as manageable psychological ones (p. 157).

The logic underwriting these multicultural endeavors is that difference can be managed and used, if it is located at the level of the individual. As communication scholars, we are familiar with this long-standing association of the field with the autonomous subject of modernity—the independent agent who chooses and acts intentionally. The narrative of the individual subject is firmly entrenched in the dominant discourses on multiculturalism and often appears in the rhetoric of corporate multiculturalism. The goal of these metropolitan or corporate multicultural programs is not to get into the messy terrain of racial politics but rather to create a savvy and cosmopolitan work force who can "skillfully" navigate cultural difference (see Rouse, 1995). The liberal approach to multiculturalism is couched in a sanitized version of difference where the unspoken centers of power, and the normativity of whiteness, remain unquestioned. This cosmetic approach to multiculturalism does not question the systemic structures of power nor does it touch the contradictions and tensions written into the realities of everyday life. This is the colonial legacy that postcolonial criticism marks, unpacks, and questions.

Postcolonial theorists provide us with the intellectual fervor and language with which to deconstruct privilege and account for the complex interconnections between power, experience, and culture. The postcolonial is more than a mere description of the past and present. Its theoretical value, as Hall (1996) notes lies precisely in its refusal of this here and there, then and now, home and abroad, perspective (p. 247). Both the liberal model of multiculturalism and the rhetoric of globalization still stay squarely within the provenance of an Euro-American metropolitan agenda. Postcolonial theorizations enable a rescripting of the encounter between cultures by firmly rejecting the "world-as-emporia" model. As long as we retain uncritical one-world narratives of the global scene, our accounts will remain at the level of marveling cappuccino

drinking in Calcutta—along the lines of Iyer's (1989) popular travelogue *Video Nights in Kathmandu*. Postcoloniality has complicated the very meaning of interconnections between cultures.

The problems of our globalized world are challenging to articulate because we cannot view them as "secure, stable objects whose meaning and nature is established before hand by disciplinary convention" (Nelson & Gaonkar, 1996, p. 18). The postcolonial approach to question, reframe, and rethink epistemic assumptions is inspired by the spirit of resistant enquiry, the drive to return the colonialist gaze. A postcolonial critique does not work to once again set up cultures in polarities, but rather the discourse points to how the West and the "other" are constitutive of one another in ways that are both complicitous and resistant (see Giroux, 1992). Communication inquiry can contribute to theorizing this space of mutual constitution.

In the next section, we address how postcolonial theory allows communication scholars points of analytical entry for a more democratic rereading of the contemporary world from new, more self-reflexive locations.

Communication and Postcolonial Possibilities

Postcolonial scholarship has raised some very volatile questions and stirred debate across disciplines. In spite of its transdisciplinary successes, the influence of postcolonial scholarship has been very limited within the communication discipline. However, it might be worthwhile to situate this within the context of recent criticisms of postcolonial scholarship from various disciplinary sites. A major and recurrent attack is that postcolonial work is overly preoccupied with theory, resulting in scholarship that is obtuse and inaccessible (see Christian, 1990; Seshadri-Crooks, 2000; Shohat, 1992).

As Hall (1996) states eloquently, the postcolonial has become "the bearer of such powerful unconscious investments—a sign of desire for some, and equally for others, a signifier of danger" (p. 242). The charge of inaccessibility arises mainly because of the interdisciplinary thrust of postcolonial studies. The study of complex areas that cross the spectrum of time and space need specific vocabularies that are unlikely to be reader-friendly and understandable to spellchecker software! Arguing whether the use of words are jargon or overly complicated, Butler (1999) asserts, is not merely debating good and bad writing, but instead presents claims about the kind of world in which we should want to live. Simplifying concepts such as alterity, worlding, or subaltern might represent the very blunting of the political edge and intellectual thrust of postcolonial schol-

arship. As Grossberg (1997) writes, "I do not know of any correlation between accessibility and significance, which is not to claim that inaccessibility is a measure of significance" (p. 31). We do not claim that postcolonial scholarship is a series of easy-to-understand axioms. It is rather, a rich and complex emerging body of work that moves us to question and map the histories and geographies of our interconnections in more responsible ways.

There is a need within the communication discipline to develop intellectual resources to begin to talk about culture as a multiplicity of trajectories. The articles presented in this issue speak to some major areas of mutual interest and overlap between postcolonial theory and communication inquiry—representation, identity, hydridity, and agency.

Theorizing the politics of representation had its beginnings in poststructuralist thought and has been developed with great intellectual sophistication in postcolonial scholarship. Following the monumental work of Said (1978), the connections between the description of the other, circulation of that knowledge, and the politics of power were firmly established. Drawing on the work of Foucault and Gramsci, Said showed that the discourse of Orientalism works in the service of the West by consistently producing the East as inferior. Though this work has met its share of criticism (such as producing the East and West as static entities and as producing a monolithic view of Orientalism) Said's work has been inspirational in the field of postcolonial research and continued theorizations of representation (e.g. Sharpe, 1993; McClintock, 1995). Of particular interest is Mohanty's (1991) work on the monolithic construction of the third world woman in feminist literature. Arguing for cultural and historical differentiation in the representation of third world women, Mohanty argues against the collapsing of subaltern lives into one essentialized saga of oppression.

The circulation of images in popular culture is an area of considerable debate within the communication discipline. What is the cumulative effect and power of these images? How is knowledge about "other" cultures reproduced without affecting the global hegemonic order? How are different national groups represented in depictions of globalization? These last two questions are investigated in Parameswaran's essay in this issue, through analysis of images from a special issue of *National Geographic*. When refracted through the lens of postcolonial theory, the author argues that benevolent images of globalization begin to narrate another story.

Identity is the next important site where the interconnections of race, class, sexuality, and gender are played out in the larger field of geopolitical structures. The transnational context provides a scenario against which we can deconstruct and move away from essentialist and univer-

salist understanding of identities. The key term that needs to addressed in this context is the postcolonial notion of hybridity. Postcolonial theory has been historically interested in the questions of liminality, in-betweeness, and mestiza. At a time when the connections between space, place, and culture have been unsettled, new forms of cultural practices are being defined globally. Hybrid practices are flooding metropolitan centers such as New York and London—ranging from fusion music, cuisine, and fashion—and these vigorously express the meeting of margin and center in new locations. Hybridity is a powerful concept by which to theorize the conflicted and multiple affiliations of diasporic groups. Postcolonial scholars have worked with these realities in innovative ways and contributed to the understanding of identities in postcolonial globality (e.g. Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1990; Gilroy, 1993; Mercer, 1994).

Hybridity is configured at the conjunction of the local, global, social, political, and legal to name some dimensions. It is above all a performative expression of transnational change, an area of imminent concern to communication scholars. In this issue, Kraidy argues that hybridity needs to be understood as a communicative practice constitutive of and constituted by, sociopolitical and economic arrangements. Examining a series of articles in the *Washington Post* on cultural globalization, he proposes a conceptual platform for a critical, cultural transnationalism problematizing issues of context, process, and representation central to intercultural and international communication.

Agency is also of mutual interest and concern to both postcolonial and communication scholarship. Once again there has been minimal engagement with the concept of agency in communication theory. In the modernist arrangement of things, agency is taken for granted. It was Spivak's landmark (1988a) piece that problematized the whole issue of agency and voice for the colonized. Examining colonial debates on widow immolation, Spivak demonstrates the predicament of the subaltern woman caught between forces of imperialism and patriarchy—there is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak. It is this piece that also brought to center stage the issue of representing the subaltern, those denied access to the centers of hegemonic power. Problematizing location, voice, and agency have become a central concern of postcolonial scholarship. Who can speak? Who can represent? Do we position the colonized as incapable of speech? On the other hand, do we romanticize the speech of the colonized as resistant and thereby deflect the violence of the colonial encounter? Our challenge lies in theorizing exactly this interstitial space between agency and the lack thereof, between being constructed within structures of domination and finding spaces of exerting agency (see O'Hanlon & Washbrook, 1992). The

bottom line is that agency is deeply bound to the politics of identity couched within the structures of gender, nation, class, race and diaspora.

In an examination of Polish and Hawaiian diaspora, Drzewiecka and Halualani's essay shows how communicative practices are used by diasporic groups to invent, reinvent and position themselves in relation to changing national, political, and economic contexts. The authors argue that focusing on the dialectical relationship between cultural practices and structural forces enables a complex understanding of diasporic politics, subjectivity, and communication. The essays presented in this issue collectively attempt to deconstruct the colonial disposition in our intellectual work and initiate a more democratic reconceptualization of communication forms and practices.

A Final Posting

There is a telling dramatic twist in Kureshi's (1996) short story, *My Son the Fanatic*. Parvez, an immigrant from Pakistan who drives a cab in England is caught off guard by his son who was raised all his life in the West. "The problem is this," the son tells his father, "You are too implicated in Western civilization." Immigrant father and son are pitted against each other in a strange reconfiguration of West and East in an unexpected order. In contradiction to all the linear models of immigrant lives, the scene captures the alienation that comes from unexpected quarters, the emergence of the political in everyday immigrant lives. While the son speaks of his religious faith, Parvez looks out the window to check that they are still in London. With that gaze of shock and disbelief, Kureshi poignantly captures the realities of cultural production and ruptures.

The contradictions and ambiguities written into postcolonial and diasporic lives under the conditions of globalization are complex subjects of study. Navigating these tensions requires both creativity and theoretical flexibility. The postcolonial move, we believe, enables the bridging of between multiple questions, issues, places, histories, and even disciplines. The reason is related, as we have argued throughout, to the very complexity of the postcolonial condition. Identities blur, overlap, and are contested within spaces that are neither coterminous nor coeval. People's lives and realities are situated within these transnational forces where power asserts itself in what Grewal and Kaplan (1994) term "scattered hegemonies." It is this conjuncture or rather disjuncture that we are attempting to understand by engaging in postcolonial intellectual practice, that will result in a more democratic intervention in the global-local dialectic.

The project of postcolonial scholarship, as stated earlier, is concerned with more than just the historical explanation of colonialism. With the

philosophic and political impulse in place, the research possibilities and connections within the discipline are many. We interviewed Spivak for this issue because we felt it was important to have her speak, as it were, to scholars in the communication discipline. As a preeminent postcolonial and feminist scholar, Spivak talks about the new directions that postcolonial work can and has branched into. "I myself find that it is not necessary to see anything innately critical or radical to remain postcolonial," says Spivak. What is important, she asserts, is that postcolonial work should be done with "complete academic responsibility."

It is the spirit of producing collaborative, academic work and furthering the dialogue on postcolonial theory and globalization within the communication discipline that led us and Lawrence Grossberg to launch this special issue devoted to postcolonial theorizing. We are grateful to the editor of *Communication Theory* for allowing us the space for putting together scholarship with a provocative edge. This is the first national issue of a communication journal devoted to postcolonial theorizing. By no means are we attempting to codify postcolonial scholarship. By definition, postcolonial theory has to maintain its flexibility and to use Spivak's term 'elasticity'. The conversation has started; we hope it yields in multiple directions and continues.

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